



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

HALEY BARBOUR
GOVERNOR

August 22, 2011

Julius Genachowski, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Universal Service Reform; WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 07-135, 05-337, 03-109; CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 96-45; and GN Docket No. 09-51

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

Mississippi's wireless experience is a model for the rest of the nation. Despite being substantially rural,¹ more than thirty-five (35%) of Mississippi's one-million households are wireless-only – the highest percentage of any state.² Adoption of and reliance on wireless requires access to the technology. In Mississippi and throughout much of rural America, that access is fueled by the Universal Service Fund and the competition it allows.

While the Commission's current efforts to make the Universal Service Fund more efficient are commendable, the FCC must take every precaution to avoid limiting competition and reducing rural Americans' access to wireless technology and mobile broadband.

As provided in the 1996 Telecommunications Act, the fundamental goal of Universal Service is to assure that all Americans have access to reasonably comparable telecommunications capabilities at reasonably comparable prices.³ In my state, Universal Service support has provided Mississippians' near ubiquitous access to wireless technology and served to catalyze innovation and efficiencies that grow new businesses, increase access to educational tools and healthcare technologies, and otherwise strengthen Mississippians' ability to compete and thrive at home and in the global economy.

The competitive pressures created by the current Universal Service system give Mississippians the opportunity to choose the technology and network that is best-suited to their personal needs or their business' needs – an opportunity comparable to that enjoyed by consumers in the nation's largest metropolitan areas. But proposed reforms reflected in the Commission's recent

¹ Per the 2010 Census, Mississippi has an average of fewer than 64 people per square mile.

² Arkansas has a similar percentage of wireless-only households. See, Gahran, A., *Arkansas, Mississippi top U.S. in Wireless-only Households*, CNN.com (April 20, 2011); <http://bit.ly/qAS1wy>.

³ See, The Communications Act of 1934, as amended by the Telecommunications Act of 1996, § 254(b).

Public Notice, such as proposals to limit USF support to only one carrier or class of carrier in a given area, threaten to undermine competition, stifle access and slow broadband adoption (wireless or otherwise) in Mississippi and other rural parts of the United States.

On behalf of more than a million Mississippians who rely daily and exclusively on wireless technology to communicate with loved-ones, conduct business, receive critical healthcare or further their education, I urge the Commission not to rush through a harmful Universal Service reform proposal in order to meet an arbitrary deadline.

Instead, the Commission should carefully and deliberately pursue a balanced approach that reforms the current Universal Service system by reducing cost, preserving choice, promoting the deployment of advanced technology, and maximizing competition in order to deliver the greatest benefits to Mississippi's and America's consumers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Haley Barbour", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Haley Barbour

cc: Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Robert McDowell